

## Waders of the Indian Subcontinent by Harkirat Singh Sangha

What an accomplishment this book is. Most works of such reach would have a number of authors and financial backers. That Mr. Harkirat Singh Sangha has produced this book mostly single-handedly with only some help from WWF-India with funds is a monumental effort.

That Harkirat mentions Point Calimere and Dr Balachandran as an inspiration brings good memories for me as I too have had the wonderful experience of banding shorebirds with 'Bala' there and that interest in India's shorebirds persists with me after 23 years.

This book is very much a handbook, it won't fit in your pocket and will be heavy in your backpack. It is packed with detail on shorebirds in the Indian Subcontinent (including Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Chagos Archipelago). The informative opening sections cover migration, flyways, research, and habitats. The habitat section is excellent and will be of particular interest to overseas readers. Anyone interested in shorebirds knows they face many threats and Harkirat doesn't shy away from this but, finishes that section with 'Areas of Hope' which I think is a nice positive touch. The book has both plates and images for all the species covered. I am more a fan of plates for identification guides but, here the two complement each other nicely. I would say the plates have an old-fashioned feel to them. That is not a criticism some of the plates are beautiful, the woodcock and snipes being prime examples. Unfortunately the Pratincole plate has not printed well and the Buff-breasted Sandpiper drawings won't help much with identification.

There is a very nice and informative part of the book early on where the author documents the early days of Indian shorebird study right through to digital photography and eBird. And, even lists some unpublished theses, emphasising the wide range of references explored and the dedication behind that. And the lack of any snobbery!

This brings me to the images. That I usually prefer plates is challenged in this book. The images are very informative. A very good mix of flight shots, breeding birds, non-breeding birds, juveniles, plumages in transition between ages. They are not chosen to be award-winning although some are, they are chosen to help the reader identifying this wonderful group of birds and they do an admirable job in that.

Maps in bird books are always a difficult part to get right, documenting sightings on a country-wide map is tricky. This book does a good job and with careful reading of the explanation in 'Range and Distribution' and then studying a few examples the maps are a good contribution to all the other information supplied for the reader.

If you are a shorebird-nerd then you should consider having this book on your shelf. If you are going to India and have any interest in shorebirds then perusing this book for a few months before you go will only enhance your subsequent trip.

A great achievement and a very nice book.

Chris J. Hassell

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C.J. Hassell assisted in a very small way with this book and received a free copy.

<https://www.harkiratsinghsangha.com/product-page/waders-of-the-indian-subcontinent>